

Message Text

SECRET

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S E C R E T CAIRO 1474

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, XF

SUBJECT: FURTHER EGYPTIAN VIEWS ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE

SUMMARY: ASU FIRST SECRETARY MOHAMED HAFEZ GHANEM RESPONDED TO STATEMENT OF US VIEW OF WAY TO MIDDLE EAST PEACE THAT LEAVING THE ISSUES TO THE PARTIES MEANS THERE WILL BE WAR. HE SAID THAT AFTER SIX YEARS OF TELLING THE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE RECOVERY OF EGYPTIAN TERRITORY IS POSSIBLE, GOE HAS TO DO SOMETHING IF POLITICAL PATH IS UNPRODUCTIVE. EGYPT IS WILLING TO AWAIT OUTCOME OF FORTHCOMING SC DEBATE, EVEN A PROTRACTED ONE. END SUMMARY

1. WASHINGTON WILL RECALL THAT GHANEM ACCOMPANIED HAFEZ ISMAIL ON VISIT LAST FEBRUARY AND THAT HE REPLACED SAYED MAREI AS FIRST SECRETARY OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE ARAB SOCIALIST UNION AT THE END OF MARCH. I MADE MY INITIAL COURTESY CALL ON HIM IN LATTER CAPACITY MAY 17; HE HAD A BUSY NOTETAKER WITH HIM.

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2. AFTER SEVERAL MINUTES OF ANECDOTAL AND RELATIVELY INCONSEQUENTIAL PRELIMINARIES, GHANEM BROUGHT UP CURRENT POLITICS, AND ASKED WHAT US PLANS TO DO. I REPLIED THAT USG REGARDS THE MIDDLE EAST AND ITS CURRENT PROBLEMS AS IMPORTANT, DOES NOT CONSIDER CONTINUANCE OF PRESENT SITUATION TO BE IN ITS OWN INTEREST OR IN THE INTEREST OF THE PARTIES TO CONFLICT, AND CONSIDERS THAT RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT MUST BE ACHIEVED BY A PROCESS ENGAGING THE PARTIES. ATTEMPTS TO IMPOSE SOLUTIONS FROM OUTSIDE WOULD COMMIT THE OUTSIDERS TO ENFORCING THE SOLUTIONS; ISRAEL AND HER NEIGHBORS MUST THEREFORE IN US VIEW SEEK ACCOMMODATION THROUGH WHATEVER PROCESS THEY CAN AGREE ON. US IS WILLING TO DO ITS PART TO BE HELPFUL IN THE CONTEXT OF A PROCESS THAT ENGAGES THE PARTIES.

3. GHANEM'S IMMEDIATE RESPONSE WAS THAT LEAVING THE PROBLEM TO THE PARTIES MEANS THAT THERE WILL BE FIGHTING. ISRAEL IS OCCUPYING EGYPTIAN TERRITORY AND REFUSES TO UNDERTAKE TO WITHDRAW; THIS, IN THE END, LEAVES EGYPT ONLY A MILITARY EFFORT TO EXPEL ISRAEL.

4. I EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING THAT AMERICAN AND EGYPTIAN CONCEPTS OF "NEGOTIATION" AND "PEACE" MIGHT DIFFER, AND THAT GOE ATTACHES IMPORTANCE TO LINKING CLARITY ON THE OUTCOME OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH UNDERTAKING TO BEGIN THEM; NEVERTHELESS, I SUGGESTED THAT SC RES 242 PROVIDED A FRAMEWORK IN WHICH AT LEAST ISRAEL AND EGYPT COULD START A PROCESS, WHICH WE AGREE SHOULD BE CONTINUOUS, TO THE FINAL IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL ITS PROVISIONS. GHANEM REPLIED THAT THERE HAS TO BE SOME "DISENGAGEMENT" OF THE MILITARY FORCES, OR THERE WILL BE WAR. I TRIED TO DISCOVER WHETHER HE WAS USING THIS WORD AS A TERM OF ART DIFFERENT IN ITS CONNOTATION FROM "WITHDRAWAL," BUT GHANEM SAID ONLY THAT DISENGAGEMENT IS A WORD HE HEARS THE GENERALS USE. THE PROBLEM IS PERSUADING ISRAEL TO BUDGE. THE WESTERN EUROPEANS, HE CONTINUED, SEE THAT ISRAEL WILL ONLY DO SO IF EFFECTIVELY PRESSED, AND FURTHER SEE THAT THE US IS THE ONLY COUNTRY THAT CAN DO THIS. BUT WASHINGTON DOES NOT SEEM TO AGREE AND MOREOVER, SEEMS TO THINK THERE IS PLENTY OF TIME, WHEN IN FACT THERE IS NOT.

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